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SUMMARY

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THE DESIGN OF LOW COST HOUSING IN RELATION TO LOCAL CONDITIONS

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THE DESIGN OF LOW COST HOUSING IN RELATION TO LOCAL CONDITIONS

by

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1. In our consideration of the problems surrounding social and economic development there is a danger that we may undervalue the significance of housing and settlement patterns. A changed economy and a changed society precipitate new settlement patterns. The form these will take in the newly-developing countries is as yet unknown. However we do know that 95% of the structures in the landscape will be houses.

2. Existing housing in the less developed areas is often ingenious in design but being built of short-life materials they are only semi-permanent. With the acceleration of urbanisation these houses are not only seen to be inadequate they are increasingly seen to be also in the wrong place. Health and educational programmes are hindered by poor housing. There is a necessity to integrate national housing policies with social and economic policies.

The Aims of Housing Policy

3. These are simple: the right houses in the right place at the right time. Survey knowledge the true foundation of policy. Whilst Governments cannot themselves build houses for all in need they do have a responsibility for creating the climate in which housing improvement at all levels of the population becomes possible. Urban land policies are an important element in the success of housing and planning policies. For economy, housing activities are desirably co-ordinated through a central executive.

Housing Standards

4. Better housing starts with the establishment of appropriate standards. The importance of establishing standards is stressed. Low-cost housing can only be "low-cost" in relation to standards laid down. There is a need for realism in framing standards: neither set too high or too low.

5. Standards fall into two main groups that are inter-related. Those which define physical performance of the structure and those concerned with health and comfort. Performance standards should reflect those set out in local building codes (revised as necessary in the light of modern technological knowledge). Health and comfort standards will include such matters as floor space, ceiling heights, air and air movement, humidity in dwellings, damp penetration, daylight and housing layout.

Town Planning and Housing Density

6. Housing related to local conditions means housing integrated within a physical development plan co-ordinating social, economic and urban development. Housing density questions can only be seriously considered against a wider background of regional objectives. Housing density in relation to any particular community and site conditions will need careful consideration to reconcile many oft-conflicting factors.

Designing for a way of life

7. No one type of house will suit every cultural situation. Family housing can only be efficiently designed against a knowledge of the local community and its regional setting. The objective is the construction of comprehensible communities rather than the erection of rows of "low-cost" houses. The social programme for house design will need to be constantly under review.

Materials and Methods

8. Local conditions form the major influences affecting choice here although with time this will become less so. A more industrialised approach to mass housing construction will be necessary if urban low-cost housing on a large scale is to be achieved. A necessary corollary will be the dimensional co-ordination of design techniques.

The high cost of "low-cost" housing

9. Even low-cost housing is still high in cost relative to the income levels of potential inhabitants. Factors influencing costs are listed and the importance of large-scale and continuous operations are stressed.

Aided Self-Help

10. This technique will remain important for many years to come yet it needs re-evaluating and re-designing if it is to become widely effective.

The Role of Housing in Economic Development Programmes

11. Housing frames the changing settlement pattern that development precipitates and gives it form. Housing in common with other development activities requires conceiving and organising at the regional level.

Housing in a developing region

12. Designed and planned in relation to a spine of capital works, roads and energy projects housing can offer a tangible improvement in regional life and bring the benefits of applied science and technology literally home to the mass of the people.

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